

Peter Folger House
51 Centre Street
Nantucket
Nantucket County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-924

HABS
MASS
10-NANT
44-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

PETER FOLGER HOUSE

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Location: 51 Centre Street (on east side)
Nantucket, Massachusetts

Present Owners: Alfred Lowden and T. F. McCrorken

Present Occupants: Same

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement
of Significance: "3-decker" residence -- very unusual for
Nantucket. House was owned and occupied
by Folger family from 1765 to 1955.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1765 -- Peter Folger.
- 1802 -- Uriah Folger, son of Peter.
- 1836 -- Judith, widow of Uriah had a life right
and on her death the house and land went
to Uriah's two sons, Peter and Frederick.
- 1852 -- Frederick Willett Folger had inherited
half from his father Frederick and the
other half was deeded to him from his
uncle, Peter.
- 1906 -- Rupert Folger, son of Frederick Willett
Folger.
- 1921 -- Bertha W. Folger, widow of Rupert
Note: Mrs. Rupert Folger's only child,
Peter Folger, was killed in action in
Italy in 1943. He was the fifth generation
of Folgers to live in the house.
- 1955 -- to date -- Alfred Lowden and T. F. McCrorken.

- 2. Date of erection: About 1765 (Receipt to Peter
Folger from Jethro Hussey "5d 11 mo 1766, 28 pounds,
10 shillings on account of building his house")
(Abstract, original receipt on file with papers of
Dr. Will Gardner at Nantucket Historical Association)
- 3. Architect: Unknown. As stated just above, Jethro
Hussey was the builder.
- 4. Original plans, construction, etc.: When the house
was built it was called "the flat-roofed house."
This roof, a very flat hip, was covered with a thin

layer of pitch. Holes near the edges indicate the location of a balustrade.

5. Notes on alterations and additions: Prior to 1815, when Uriah Folger was occupying the house, he is quoted as saying he could stand it no longer, and changed the roof to the present gable type at an expense of \$105. House has a Captain's walk on the roof, probably placed there when roof changed.

At the same time, the entrance hall was extended as a square projection from the front of the house, the winder stairs were changed to a straight run, and a kitchen was added at the north corner. The partition of the borning room has been removed and other slight modifications made to the house.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Five generations of Folgers lived in the house between 1765 and 1955, when it passed out of the family ownership. Peter Folger who built this house was known as the fourth Peter. The first Peter, his ancestor, was one of the first settlers on Nantucket. Born in Norwich, England in 1617, he came to Nantucket to live permanently in 1663. He was a very important man, holding many positions. His daughter Abiah, the only child of his that was born on Nantucket, became the mother of Benjamin Franklin. (Abstract, Collections of Mass. Historical Society for the year 1794. Also see A Grandfather for Benjamin Franklin by Anderson.)

Zaccheus Macy wrote in 1792, "I conclude therefore that he (Franklin) inherited a part of his noble publick spirit from his grandfather, Peter Folger."

It is interesting to note that Centre Street was laid out in 1678 when the Wesco Acre Lots were divided and so it was one of the first ways opened within the present limits of the town.

On the site of the present house William Gayer built his early Colonial house in 1684. He was a well educated man and is said to be one of the few Englishmen in America who were entitled to Coats of Arms. (Abstract, Nantucket Historical Association, by Henry Barnard Worth, N.H.A. Bulletin, v. 2, no. 1) The Gayer house was taken down and part of it used to build what is at the present time the Overlook Hotel, around the corner on Step Lane.

- C. Sources of Information:

- a. Old Views: painting of house in 1888?, in house; photograph of doorway, White Pine Series, Early Dwellings of Nantucket, 1917, p. 13; photograph

in Ninety-five Per Cent Perfect by Everett Uberto
Crosby, 1953, p. 48.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin
Nantucket, Massachusetts
July, 1965

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. This is part of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photographs are by Cortlandt V. D. Hubbard of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, July 1971.

Addendum to:
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REDUCED COPIES OF DRAWINGS

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